

Management Committee for the Advisory Process

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REPORT OF THE

Study Group on ACFM, ACE, ACME, and Working Group Protocols

ICES HQ

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1 CONCLUSIONS OF THE MEETING

The Group analysed ICES's advisory needs and how an advisory structure can meet these needs. The solution was found in taking a more flexible approach to the *modus operandi* of the assessment groups, to establish review groups separate from the advisory committees and to task certain groups with long term considerations within a regional ecosystem context. Finally, the existing system for fast track advice could be used more extensively than at present and SGAWWP advised that ACFM establishes a function to deal with this type of advice. SGAWWP finds that the proposed structure is general and could apply to fisheries, environmental and ecosystem oriented groups.

The main advantage of the proposed structure over the present system is its flexibility such flexibility should allow better use of resources. The flexibility exists in the present system through having groups working by correspondence but should be encouraged and used more widespread. Also, MCAP's possibility to establish *ad-hoc* groups at short notice should be more widely used. The Secretariat needs to develop tools for establishing electronic discussion forums, conference calls etc. Another step forward is that the review process is more clearly identified and distinct from the assessments in the advisory process. Finally, the system includes a path for fast track advice. This path cannot be fully developed until Clients have become specific with their needs and a more adequate basis of databases to enable such advice has been developed.

The Group proposed a structure with the following key characteristics

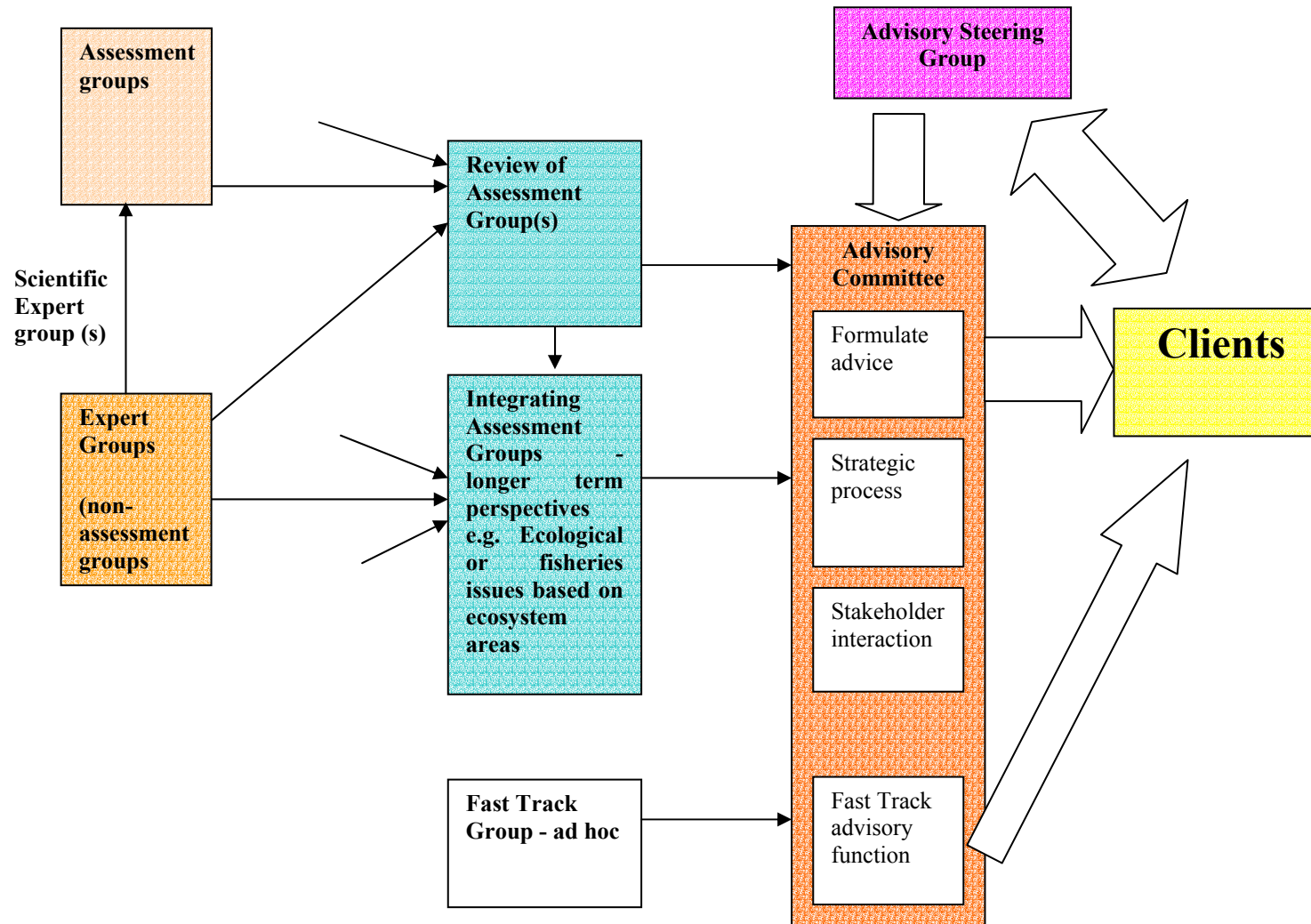
- The system includes assessment groups, fast track groups, review groups, Integrating assessment groups dealing with longer term perspectives and advisory committees;
- The ICES working group structure is maintained, but their working procedures are made more flexible than under the present structure;
- The review group structure is maintained but is separated from the advisory committee(s);
- A set of groups to deal with system integration in a longer term perspective (Integration Assessment Groups) is clearly identified in the ICES advisory and assessment structure;

This structure will be a unified structure, which will produce advice regarding fisheries, environmental and ecosystem issues even though the advisory committee structure initially includes three advisory committees.

Members of the expert and assessment groups will be appointed through the same system as of present from scientists nominated by Delegates. The review groups will be recruited from experts not involved with the assessment to be reviewed. These experts may be employees of national research institutes that regularly take part in ICES work or come from academia that are not normally involved with ICES assessments. The advisory committees membership will remain unchanged with national members. SGAWWP noted the ICES discussion on admitting observers to assessment groups and advisory committees. The Group found that admission of such observers could easily be incorporated in the proposed structure, see Bureau doc on observers.

The proposed structure is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Proposed ICES Assessment and Advisory Structure.



Comments on the model (see Figure 1)

- The assessment groups (fish stock assessment working groups or other expert assessment groups, assessment teams) will include members from several national institutes that take part in ICES work (so-called ICES institutes). Among the tasks assigned to these groups will be to provide the basis for the annual fisheries advice. Other tasks will relate to responses to requests for environmental or ecosystem advice. The groups are obliged to provide an assessment according to a specified schedule. The members of expert groups are placed in different laboratories - and the Group may meet or work by remote communication. The organisation should be flexible.
- The review groups will peer review the output from the assessment groups. These review groups will replace the present subgroups of ACFM and will take on review of environmental and ecosystem advice as well. The review groups will include members of the advisory committees but largely be recruited from experts outside the advisory committees but recruited among the staff of national institutes that take part in ICES work. The review groups may include experts external to the ICES system.
- The Integrating Assessment Groups dealing with longer-term perspectives will work on a different time scale than the assessment groups and also the emphasis on the topics will vary over time. Their aim is to:
 - Integrate across different disciplines such as food competition among fishes and climatic forcing;
 - Provide long term status approaches such as harvest control rules, recovery plans and ecosystem health indicator frameworks;
 - Contribute to the implementations of an ecosystem approach on an appropriate geographical scale.
- The advisory committee(s) will work from reviewed assessments and/or reviewed long term perspective reports. In addition to dealing with requested advice, the advisory committees need to develop strategic direction for their work taking into account current and future needs for advice. This is important in order to constantly improve the quality and cost-effectiveness of the provision of advice.
- Fast Track groups will be *ad-hoc* groups drawn from a pool of experts. The establishment of this pool of experts will require a formal arrangement (MoU?) among the involved institutes.
- An Advisory Steering Group should be developed from MCAP and WGOOP. This Group will provide a forum for strategic discussions and provide a clear way for input from the Clients to the ICES advisory system. WGOOP would no longer be needed. Coordination of the advisory committee and management of incoming requests would remain with MCAP.

SGAWWP proposes that the advisory committees:

- work out the proposed structure further;
- test the applicability of the proposed structure through pilot project(s);
- and in particular ACFM, accept that much of advisory work is done through MoUs or explicit requests for advice. Therefore, the advisory committees have little influence on the TORs; perhaps the advisory committees could use the Annual Consultations for strategic discussions.

2 OPENING OF MEETING AND WELCOME

The meeting was opened on Thursday 20 February 2003 at 14:00 hrs with Gerd Hubold as Chair. The list of participants is given in Annex 1. The Group met with the following TORs:

- a) review the Expert Group structure supporting the advisory process on ecosystem issues;
- b) advise MCAP on how to use and, if required, adjust the current Expert Group structure in order to facilitate cost-effective production of scientific information and advice on ecosystem status and management;
- c) develop a proposal for a working protocol, for implementation by ACFM, on improving efficiency of ACFM and the Fish Stock Assessment Working Groups. The protocol should describe:
 - a. working procedures of ACFM;
 - b. working procedures of the Working Groups;
- d) meeting time required by the Fish Stock Assessment Working Groups and ACFM, taking into account the proposals for changes in the working procedures made by this Study Group and those adopted by MCAP;
- e) develop a protocol for the Secretariat support for the Expert Groups, including the provision of data and data handling;
- f) advise MCAP on how recruiting of expertise to ACFM and ACE and their Expert Groups, particularly the assessment Working Groups, might be amended to ensure available expertise to meet the obligations laid down in the MoUs between the Fisheries Commissions and ICES, and to meet the needs for fish population dynamics expertise in developing ecosystem advice.

3 ADOPTION OF AGENDA

The draft agenda was adopted, see Annex 2. The Chair reviewed the documents and assigned papers to agenda item, see Annex 3.

4 RAPPORTEURS

The Environment Adviser Janet Pawlak and the Fisheries Adviser Hans Lassen acted as rapporteurs for the meeting.

5 REVIEW OF TERMS OF REFERENCE AND OBJECTIVES OF MEETING

The Chair reviewed the TORs and noted that SGAWWP partly was a follow-up of the Study Group on ACFM Working Procedures that met in 2002. This report was well known to the participants. The TORs for this meeting are wider than those of SGWP (2002). It was recognised that the meeting had to consider two problems: 1) fisheries advice in an ecosystem context, and 2) advice to support the broader ecosystem approach to management.

A considerable part of the meeting time was spent on a review of the response so far to the 13 recommendations of the February 2002 Study Group and the expectation that Council at the next Delegates meeting discuss and take decision on all of the 13 recommendations that have not been acted upon so far.

5.1 Fisheries Advice in an Ecosystem Context

The Reykjavik 2001 and Johannesburg 2002 Declarations set the scene of the need to provide future fisheries advice in an ecosystem context. The Reykjavik Declaration states in Para 3:

It is important to strengthen, improve, and where appropriate establish, regional and international fisheries management organizations and incorporate in their work ecosystem considerations and improve cooperation between those bodies and regional bodies in charge of managing and conserving the marine environment.

The Plan of Implementation for the Johannesburg 2002 Declaration states:

(29d) Encourage the application by 2010 of the ecosystem approach, noting the Reykjavik Declaration on Responsible Fisheries in the Marine Ecosystem and decision 5/6 of the Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity;

Also, the revised Common Fisheries Policy (EC) includes similar considerations, e.g., EC on their homepage on fisheries states:

Sea fish are a natural, renewable and mobile resource whose reproduction and movements are beyond our control. Fish resources are part of our common heritage. Healthy stocks can sustain a reasonable rate of fishing but they need a healthy marine environment. Fisheries and aquaculture activities must be regulated through international cooperation to allow for the continuous renewal of stock;

5.2 Ecosystem approach

The North Sea Intermediate Ministerial Meeting on the Integration of Fisheries and Environmental Issues in March 1997 agreed to develop and apply an ecosystem approach as a guiding principle to further the integration of fisheries and environmental protection, conservation and management measures.

In the Bergen Declaration from the 5th NSC in 2002 this was followed up:

•2. *The Ministers therefore agree to implement an ecosystem approach by identifying and taking action on influences, which are critical to the health of the North Sea ecosystem. In particular they agree that management will be guided by the conceptual framework set out in Annex 2, which includes:*

- *the development of general and operational environmental goals;*
- *best use of available scientific and technical knowledge about the structure and function of the ecosystem;*
- *best use of scientific advice;*
- *integrated expert assessment;*
- *coordinated and integrated monitoring;*
- *involvement of all stakeholders; and*
- *policy decisions and control and enforcement.*

The EU Stakeholder Conference, Køge, Denmark, 4–6 December 2002 gave the following technical definition of an ecosystem approach,

Comprehensive integrated management of human activities based on best available scientific knowledge about the ecosystem and its dynamics, in order to identify and take action on influences which are critical to the health of the marine ecosystems, thereby achieving sustainable use of ecosystem goods and services and maintenance of ecosystem integrity.

This definition is based on a definition elaborated by ACME and ACE:

Integrated management of human activities based on knowledge of ecosystem dynamics to achieve sustainable use of ecosystem goods and services, and maintenance of ecosystem integrity.

The ecosystem approach to management as defined and outlined, put demands on the scientific advisory function in terms of best use of scientific knowledge and scientific advice and the integrated expert assessments to support such advice.

5.3 SGAWWP approach to addressing the TORs

SGAWWP addressed three main topics: 1) how to create a basis for more strategic development of the advisory process; 2) review the use of existing resources and make proposals that will increase the efficiency and quality of the assessment and advisory process; and 3) consider how fast track procedure can be incorporated in the ICES advisory structure. The strategic challenges include being pro-active in assisting Clients to develop a new approach to fisheries management, and to the protection of marine ecosystems.

Also, the Chair noted that the discussions focus on the ACFM-ACE issues; the Supporting information for the meeting states *Although the SG is not expected to review working procedures for ACME it should consider implications of its proposals.* With the present membership of SGAWWP, see Annex 1, the Chair concluded that possible ACME issues will not be dealt with.

Finally, the Chair noted that TOR e) [a protocol for the Secretariat support] would be difficult to deal with in the present context. The Secretariat has a range of tasks not only confined to serving the advisory committees and a discussion should include wishes for improved service to the advisory committees and their working groups and all aspects of the Secretariat work. Therefore, he did not foresee major time being spent on this TOR item.

6 REVIEW OF ADVISORY STRUCTURE

SGAWWP identified the following issues of relevance to the advisory structure:

- Integration of advice – unified structure
 - Ecosystem assessment and advice
 - Ecosystem approach to fisheries management
 - Fisheries stock advice
- Best possible use of resources
- Quality assurance
- Stakeholder involvement
 - Include users' knowledge
 - Communicate assessments and review
- Better dialogue with Clients
- Respond to short term needs
 - Fast track
- Relevance to management
 - Clarity, consistency
 - Cooperative longer-term development of advice

6.1 Ecosystem Assessments

Ecosystem assessment and advice was discussed in the light of paper no 15. This paper is a short overview document on ecosystem issues within ICES. This paper contains a list of relevant questions on ecosystem issues, definitions of key terms, and a list of various types of assessments. The paper listed a number of Large Marine Ecosystems in the ICES area and these were proposed for consideration in building an ecosystem approach structure.

Thematic assessments deal with particular aspects of the marine environment, such as the ecological impacts of fisheries, environmental effects of mariculture, eutrophication (effects of nutrient input), pollution, etc. A **general assessment** (or holistic assessment) considers all the relevant aspects of the marine environment, building on appropriate thematic assessments. A general assessment for a given area or ecosystem can be considered an **ecosystem assessment**. ICES has, to a variable extent, contributed to the production of thematic and general assessments as requested by OSPAR and HELCOM over recent years.

SGAWWP reviewed ICES possibilities for further and improved contributions to ecosystem assessments. SGAWWP concluded that much information is available in specific groups; the main missing element is regionally focussed groups, which can address integration of information from specialist groups. This is currently a gap in ICES's ability to look on the broader issues in an ecosystem context.

ICES has a number of groups that can deal with thematic assessments. These include WGECO (Working Group on Ecosystem Effects of Fisheries), WGEIM (Working Group on Environmental Interactions of Mariculture), WGEXT (Working Group on the Effects of Extraction of Marine Sediments), WGITMO (Working Group on Introduction and Transfer of Marine Organisms) a.o. A specific gap is that ICES is missing a group to compile information on eutrophication.

In considering how the questions that ICES receives from its Clients relate to ecosystem assessments, SGAWWP noted that ICES often needs to anticipate Client's wishes and that Clients not always formulate their questions precisely. The Group made a clear distinction between Ecosystem assessments and Fisheries advice in an ecosystem context. It is the latter that is most urgently requested by major Clients.

In concluding the discussion the Group made a clear distinction between advice to Clients in direct response to questions and 2) more general scientific advice. The advisory structure should focus on Client's needs; SGAWWP

needs to define a process with close interaction with Clients (strategic development) and with inputs from both sides (management and science). Finally, it was strongly emphasised that requests should be answerable within the available resources.

In discussing the tasks of the advisory committees SGAWWP noted that the general strategy is to distinguish the tasks assigned to the science committees and tasks assigned to the advisory committees more clearly than is the case today. Front line science should be developed through the science committees and the advisory committees should use science products as a basis for their advice, see ICES Action Plan 2002.

6.2 The Advisory Structure

At the start of the discussion it was recognised that the ICES advisory function on the fisheries management side is overloaded. The ICES advisory system needs to reduce the workload and thereby regain the ability to become proactive.

SGAWWP recognises that ACFM, ACE, and ACME are not equivalent in their tasks, reflecting differences in the management systems requesting advice. The main activity for ACFM has recently been to provide recurrent advice on status, catch quotas and other management measures for fish stocks within an annual management cycle. There is, however, a need and a wish from Clients that ACFM provides more advisory inputs of a longer-term scope such as evaluations of recovery plans, a wider suite of management options and fleet and species interactions. ACME and ACE provide advice on status and management options for a range of environmental and ecosystem issues, in response to non-recurrent requests from environmental and fisheries management organisations. The advice to these requests typically belongs to a longer-term management cycle than the annual and is partly related to policy development. The ICES advisory structure needs to be able to respond to new types of requests and to deal with problems with the present system as identified in SGWP 2002. SGAWWP reviewed the response so far of the recommendations from SGWP (2002) and noted that some progress has been made. The review is summarised in Annex 5 where each of the 13 recommendations made by SGWP are commented upon.

One issue is how the ACFM advice could become more orientated to the incorporation of ecosystem considerations; this requires consideration of the influence of climatic, oceanographic, and biological factors on growth, recruitment, etc., of fish and fish stocks. This would be enhanced by a more regional approach to these issues.

The Group agreed after considerable discussion that there are problems with the advisory structure and that the obvious solution is a more unified advisory system, which ultimately may only include one advisory committee. The Implementation Plan of the Johannesburg declaration underlines this need for unification of the advisory level. This plan sets a date for the introduction of the ecosystem approach to 2010. SGAWWP finds that consultations between two advisory committees will not be sufficient, ICES needs a system that can address the ecosystem approach and this requires a unified system.

There is a need for an open and frank discussion of a more unified structure and SGAWWP encourage MCAP and the Council to revisit this issue in the light of its discussions in October 2002. Without prejudging this discussion and because of the need to achieve consistent ICES advice and to achieve a common approach to the advisory process SGAWWP sees a need to have ACFM and ACE working closely together. This may be achieved by e.g., parallel sessions, overlapping sessions, re-considering how work is split etc.

The discussion was then narrowed: *How can we develop the fisheries advice into an ecosystem context leaving for the moment the broader environmental issues aside.*

The Group agreed that a future structure should include:

- A unified advisory system;
- A system that could present the present product, the annual advice but at reduced workload - An approach that reflects management needs and can be done within the available resources;
- A system that can address the short term issues (fast track advice);
- A system addressing longer-term issues;
- A system that addresses ecosystem and fisheries issues on a geographical (ecosystem) scale.

ICES must take better control of its advisory system, and try to find where the priorities are, thus trying to free resources for other activities. ICES should develop alternative ways of handling issues or stocks of lower priority and develop a structure to improve the system to meet broader priorities and longer-term needs.

6.3 Peer Review system

Peer review of the scientific analysis is a cornerstone in present day advisory systems. There are several reasons for peer review: (1) to find errors and show the quality of the methods used and their application; (2) to demonstrate to Clients and stakeholders that what has been done meets standards of good quality; and 3) to achieve transparency and public credibility. The key issue is to identify a structure that puts this required peer review into place, without excessive costs.

The present system includes peer review as part of the work of the advisory committees. However, SGAWWP considered that it would be better to remove the peer review from the advisory committee and have this process as a well defined isolated entity. SGAWWP took note of the recommendation adopted by Council (October 2002) and considered that the core of the review would need to be done within ICES drawing on independent expertise from "ICES institutes" and European academia. This would require additional funds and SGAWWP is looking to the Council to identify such funds. The Clients have clearly indicated that quality assurance is an integral element in delivering high quality advice and costs should be covered within the current contributions.

SGAWWP recognises that ICES will need to be open to external reviewer as requested by the Council in its resolution October 2002. However, before that is done it should be made clear what kind of work they should do and how the structure for a strategic review should be. Finally the cost issue should be resolved. SGAWWP found that external reviewers should focus on a general strategic review of the advisory structure.

ICES needs

- Clearly identifiable review groups distinct from the assessment and advisory groups
- An agreement among the fisheries institutes on a system for exchange of experts to man the review groups
- An extension of the present review system and separate it from ACFM
- Establishment of a strategic review of the advisory structure and its quality assurance procedures

6.4 Membership of the Advisory Committee(s)

SGAWWP repeated its wish to develop a unified structure. The Group reviewed the recruitment process and concluded that the national membership had both positive and negative sides. However, for the time being SGAWWP did not propose changing the recruitment procedure to the advisory committee(s). In order to achieve balanced and appropriate expertise to the advisory committees it may be worthwhile to re-consider the use of the pool system adopted in 1998.

Since 1978, when the Liaison Committee was replaced as the channel for ICES advice on fisheries management, ACFM has been composed of national nominees who are then appointed by the Council. ICES pays the travel and per diem expenses of the members. By this understanding, ACFM members have been deemed to be individual experts acting on behalf of ICES, and not national representatives. The system is designed to confer independence on ACFM, while guaranteeing that scientists from all ICES member countries are involved in formulating the advice.

To achieve these advantages, member countries have an obligation to nominate competent scientists to ACFM, and to recognise that ACFM members must remain free of national influence. This system has been operating successfully.

Nevertheless, the actual independence and transparency of the process have been questioned from time to time. Furthermore, the national nominee composition of ACFM does not necessarily produce the best range of expertise around the table to allow ACFM to work in the most effective way.

6.5 Assessment Groups and Review Groups

SGAWWP wants a structure that can serve the provision of advice concerning both fisheries, environmental and ecosystem issues.

It was recognised that the Working Group structure and its operational procedures had developed over long time and that there are important and positive elements in this structure. SGAWWP on the other hand finds that a more dynamic approach to dealing with the necessary cooperation between the laboratories should be explored and therefore that pilot experiments with other structures should be initiated. The present structure with physical meetings may no longer be the best approach.

There was a range of views from consideration that the working group structure is out of date and that it would be better to have assessments done at national laboratories and ICES would have the review groups only. There were others who found that the present working group structure includes important positive elements and that these would be lost if the assessments were outsourced to the laboratories. Such outsourcing would lose the interaction between the experts.

The overriding concern was to allow a flexible approach to the *modus operandi* of the assessment groups. The structure should be general so that it could apply to both fish stock assessment and to the environmental oriented groups. There was a proposal that the assessments would be done by teams of assessment scientists who will prepare the assessment and write a report on the outcome. These teams of scientists could involve scientists from several institutes and could in some cases also involve the widest relevant expertise. Their working mode should be flexible, but they would be required to prepare a report by a specific date. An ICES review group will then review this assessment report. This may not work well for some stocks or for some areas.

The proposal should be applicable for all assessment groups (not only fish stock assessment). The main advantage over the present system is its flexibility. This flexibility exists in the present system through having groups working by correspondence but should be encouraged and used more widespread. Also, the flexibility should allow better use of resources. The Secretariat needs to help in developing tools for establishing electronic discussion forums, conference calls etc. Another step forward is that the review process is more clearly identified in the ICES advisory process. Finally, the system includes a path for fast track advice. This path cannot be fully developed until Clients have become specific with their needs.

6.6 Fast Track Advice

SGAWWP recognises that the advisory system must include provisions for “fast-track advice”. This means that ICES shall have access to fast assessment teams and fast-track review teams based in national laboratories. The review is necessary to maintain the scientific quality of ICES advice. ICES needs to consider how it can respond to this need on the ACFM level, as semi-annual meetings are not adequate.

The EC participants at WGCOOP had reported that the EC STECF would take on the provision of advice that needs to be prepared in a short time frame. However, it was pointed out that this discussion is still ongoing in the EU, and that member countries’ views still need to be taken into account in the final decision, which will be made in the middle of this year.

SGAWWP concluded that at least part of the demands for fast track advice will come to ICES and ICES should be able to respond to these requests. ICES has in the past dealt with requests for non-recurrent advice, including advice that is processed through ACFM through a mail procedure. ICES needs to demonstrate a workable proposal to show to ICES Member Countries and to the EC. Preparation of this proposal should have a high priority in ICES. Unless ICES signals very clearly that it is willing to take on such advice, the EC will seek alternative solutions.

SGAWWP reminded itself on the existing procedures for accepting non-recurrent requests and noted that fast-track advice would be in this category. The procedures involve acceptance of requests by MCAP after consultations with relevant chairs. The advice is vetted by ACFM in a mail procedure.

A fast track advice mechanism include:

- Establishing ad-hoc teams
- Mail procedure

7 REVIEW OF RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY GROUP ON ACFM WORKING PROCEDURES [SGWP] (ICES CM 2002/MCAP:01)

SGWP’s recommendations were discussed by MCAP, ACFM, ACE and ACME in 2002. Furthermore, the SGWP report was discussed by the Delegates in October 2002. The review therefore focused on the implementation of these recommendations to the extent that the original recommendations were supported by the ICES governing bodies.

2.1 *The implication of the European Commission ideas about alternative advisory structures external to ICES need to be carefully considered by ICES.*

SGAWWP was established to look in detail at the ICES advisory structure and the proposal made in this report is SGAWWP’s response to the challenge.

ICES recognises the intentions of the European Commission in establishing regional advisory bodies. ICES would like to meet the needs of the clients. It feels that it should not do this at the expense of the quality of the advice. There have been several problems in this regard for some of the advice delivered in the autumn owing to bringing the schedule forward two weeks.

The proposal that has been made for a subsidiary advisory body was noted. The Bureau had considered this proposal and, while agreeing that the diagnosis was correct, they felt that it was important to retain a “corporate ICES identity” in the advisory process.

- 2.2 *ICES needs to introduce a more effective peer review system. It should co-operate with the North Sea Commission Fisheries Partnership in developing an independent peer review system for North Sea stocks. ICES should use this project as a basis for developing its own programme of peer review which would apply more widely within the advisory process. Any changes should be introduced gradually.*

There is general agreement with the intention of the recommendation that the ICES advisory process needs to be transparent, visible and clearly identifiable. There is, as discussed and agreed by MCAP, a clear policy to establish an external review of the ICES advisory process. However, a shake-up of the review process of the fish stock assessments should take first priority. The proposal made by SGAWWP above is seen as a more efficient approach than the model used by the North Sea Commission Fisheries Partnership.

SGAWWP recognises that there are two different reasons for peer review (1) to find errors and show the quality of the methods used and their application; (2) to show to clients and stakeholders that what has been done meets external standards of good quality. The latter is necessary in the present climate of mistrust among the industry. The key issue is to identify a structure that puts this into place, without costing a great deal of money.

- 2.3 *ACFM needs to develop a strategic direction for its work taking into account current and future needs for fishery advice. This will allow it to adapt to and identify the science required to improve advice.*

The change introduced by ACFM to remove the technical peer review of the assessment from ACFM to review groups meeting either by correspondence or at meetings outside ACFM should provide the necessary resources that will allow ACFM to address the strategic issues.

SGAWWP finds that this requires MoUs between institutes to ensure that experts will be made available.

An alternative proposal was to have these review groups on a regional basis and that some ecosystem considerations should be included in the deliberations of these groups. Again the idea was noted but it was found that this required further analysis.

- 2.4 *ACFM needs to dispense with work currently undertaken which is unproductive or could be done more effectively in other fora.*

ACFM has reviewed the issue and will keep its agenda under constant review. SGAWWP was confident that ACFM would deal with this issue effectively;

- 2.5 *ICES should embark on a programme of work to propose harvest control rules for as many stocks as possible to simplify the advisory process and improve consistency. Such work will require close dialogue with customers.*

This topic is addressed through work in the Study Group on the Further Development of the Precautionary Approach (SGPA).

- 2.6 *ICES should identify and apply simpler methods of assessment where possible to reduce the burden of assessment working groups.*

This is a technical issue that is discussed in ACFM, in the assessment working groups and in the Methods Working Group.

- 2.7 *ACFM does not appear to have sufficient expertise to deal effectively with the advice on salmon, trout and eel. ICES should therefore investigate whether there are alternative approaches to making better use of the expertise on anadromous and catadromous fish biology in the ICES member countries, by giving advice on these groups from outside ACFM. This will bring more expertise into the process, improve quality and free up resources on ACFM.*

ACFM has changed its procedures in 2000 *inter alia* to ensure that salmon expertise is available for the peer review of the assessment;

- 2.8 *ICES should discuss the most appropriate way of providing advice on stocks exclusively managed by coastal states. At present advice on these stocks is provided in a standard ICES format but which may not be relevant to the management systems for these fisheries.*

ICES has discussed this issue with one of its clients but the client did not wish for a change of the form of advice.

- 2.9 *ICES should enter into a dialogue with customers to identify stocks for which no advice can usefully be given on an annual basis. This includes stocks where management units do not match assessment units and stocks where no scientific data are available.*

This is part of the discussion on multi-annual advice and harvest control rules raised above.

- 2.10 *ACFM in co-operation with the ICES Secretariat should develop software to expedite the production of standard tables and figures for reports from analytical input and output files.*

The Secretariat is working on this issue and has had financial support from Norway to further this project.

- 2.11 *In order to address the problem of fast track response to ad hoc advisory requests it is recommended that as a matter of urgency, ICES, its clients and the member countries should negotiate a proper framework within which additional requests are managed to their mutual satisfaction.*

It is not clear if ICES is requested to provide “fast-track advice” and if so to what extent. The discussion is therefore a bit theoretical. The structure proposed by SGAWWP should provide the necessary flexibility to would be a prerequisite for implementing a “fast-track advice” system.

- 2.12 *ICES should refrain from agreeing to respond to requests for advice when it has no commitment from member countries to provide the necessary resources. This will avoid unrealistic expectations of ICES by its customers.*

MCAP is managing ICES policy on accepting requests.

- 2.13 *ICES needs to reconsider how a regional dimension can be accommodated in its advisory structure in order to bring greater integration and more relevant knowledge and expertise to bear in relation to differing geographical management systems and ecosystems.*

SGAWWP discussed the structure with the regional working groups providing long-term work integrating fisheries and ecosystem issues and it was questioned whether this would fit with the current structure with three advisory committees. Particularly between ACFM and ACE it would seem to call for only one committee to cover the area, probably without including ACME. However, the problem was raised of the wide range of expertise required to cover the large span of scientific fields that this involves. This calls into question the present system of one nationally nominated member per country. Several years ago, there was a roster of five experts per country who could be used to compose the advisory committee based on the items on the agenda. It was recalled that the roster system had been employed for two or three years before the creation of ACE. ACME had used this roster system to ensure that persons with the most relevant expertise to the issues on the agenda. This appeared to work quite well, but the system ceased with the establishment of ACE.

It was proposed that the first operational step would be to set up regional ecosystem working groups to bring together the information from all the relevant expert groups and formulate a unified treatment of the requests relevant to that region. This can then be reviewed by the advisory committees for the preparation of the advice. In terms of stakeholder input, it was proposed that the clients be made members of MCAP so that their administrative concerns could be taken into account at this level. This does not change the representation of

observers at the meetings of the advisory committees. However, SGAWWP considered that this particular step would await finalisation of the implementation schemes and basis that are under development in ACE.

Reference was made to the highly relevant ideas presented in "Rethinking the ICES Advisory Structure", a paper from September 2002 by the MCAP Chair, and the need for them to be considered in the discussion. Since the paper had not yet been distributed to all participants or even all ICES-delegates, it was agreed that the paper should not be discussed at the meeting but—after general distribution—in connection with future deliberations in the Council and possible working groups relating to the advisory structure and process.

8 PROPOSAL FOR A REVISED ADVISORY STRUCTURE

SGAWWP drew up a revised structure taking into account the analysis done and taken into account the recommendations of SGWP (2002). This proposal is intended for use for both fisheries and environmental advice. The proposed structure is shown in Figure 1.

The Group agreed that the proposed assessment structure in the advisory process should be analysed further; possibly this analysis would need a full Study Group to look more closely into the proposal. SGAWWP recognised that the proposed changed structure may use the existing resources more efficiently; but also that the increase in efficiency may not be of such magnitude that the fundamental problem: lack of resources is removed.

By introducing flexibility in operational procedures of the assessment groups it is expected that more efficient use can be made of the available and strained resources.

8.1 Meeting time

SGAWWP discussed the structure presented in Figure 1 with respect to required meeting time. The meeting time with the assessments may be reduced depending on how the work is structured within each group. SGAWWP concluded that as far as the review and advisory elements were concerned the system would not save time. However, extra time would be required for the long-term groups.

9 PROPOSAL FOR A STUDY GROUP ON BEST ASSESSMENT PRACTISE

SGAWWP proposes that in 2004 a Study Group should make an inventory of the ICES assessments and assessments done in other organisations, review the assessment approach and develop a manual on best practise. This would be an element in the general strategic review that is required. SGAWWP considers that the discussion of simpler methods of assessment should be connected to best practise approach.

10 EXPERTISE IN THE ADVISORY COMMITTEES

The general strategy is to deal with the scientific issues in science committees, front line science should be developed through the science committees and the advisory committees should use science product as a basis for their advice {see ICES Action Plan 2002}. However, in the present system securing sufficient and relevant scientific expertise for advisory system has always been a concern. In the proposed structure the advisory committees will be vetting the assessment procedure and formulates advice based on accepted/reviewed assessments; the advisory committees are not providing expertise. Therefore, expertise required of members in the future advisory committee(s) would be of a general nature instead of the specialised expertise sought at present.

However, until the review system is changed as proposed by SGAWWP because the advisory committees peer review the assessments, the available expertise and the balance of this expertise is a concern. SGAWWP sees a definite need for better coordination between ACFM and ACE, and also that balanced and right expertise is available to the advisory committees. This may be achieved by drawing membership from a pool of experts. The pool of 5 worked well for ACME, but only worked for three years. The system was abandoned with the creation of ACE. The system was also helpful in assigning responsibilities prior to the meeting.

The science expert groups should also draw on academia in addition to the contributions from the usual ICES institutes.

11 LIMITATIONS OF SCIENTIFIC ADVICE

A general issue is that the limits to science have not been communicated adequately enough to the Clients, so that too much has been promised to management concerning what science can do and on what time scale. This has been the case with fisheries and would undoubtedly also occur on the ecosystem issues. SGAWWP could only warn against repeating the mistake and ask the advisory groups and MCAP in being careful in creating expectation among Clients.

12 DEVELOPMENT OF A PROTOCOL FOR SECRETARIAT SUPPORT FOR EXPERT GROUPS (TOR (E))

There was not adequate time available for a thorough discussion. This discussion was rather brief and no decision was reached. The following points were made:

- There needs to be a balance between the budget and the support that the Secretariat gives to the groups. There is only so much money and so many people in the Secretariat to assist the groups; this could be rebalanced, but this needs an analysis and more time for discussion.
- Also, the structure that will be decided will have consequences for the requirements on the Secretariat. If assessments will be made outside the Secretariat, this will have implications for the management of the fisheries data.

SGAWWP recognised that this problem should be dealt with in MCAP and that MCAP should look at the possibilities to take this point further. MCAP can consult with WG Chairs to see what the problems are and prepare proposals.

13 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

ICES will in the future report on why a particular question could not be done or the answer would be of poor quality including naming laboratories and countries. Assessment working groups need to report in an open language on why the assessments are of poor quality, including mis-reporting, non-reporting and unallocated catches.

ANNEX 1: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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ANNEX 2: AGENDA

Study Group on ACFM, ACE, ACME and Working Group Working Protocols (SGAWWP)

ICES Headquarters, 20–22 February 2003

1. Opening of meeting and welcome
2. Adoption of agenda and working procedures
3. Appointment of rapporteurs
4. Review of terms of reference and objectives of the meeting
5. Review Expert Group structure supporting the advisory process on ecosystem issues and propose adjustments, if required, to facilitate cost-effective production of scientific information and advice on ecosystem status and management
6. Develop a proposal for a working protocol, for implementation by ACFM, to improve the efficiency of ACFM and the Fish Stock Assessment Working Groups, including
 - a. Working procedures of ACFM
 - b. Working procedures of Stock Assessment Working Groups
 - c. Meeting time required by Stock Assessment Working Groups and ACFM, taking into account proposals for changes in working procedures adopted by MCAP and those developed under this agenda item
7. Develop a protocol for Secretariat support for Expert Groups, including the provision of data and data handling
8. Prepare advice for MCAP concerning potential amendments that could be made in the recruiting of expertise to ACFM and ACE and their Expert Groups, particularly Stock Assessment Working Groups, to ensure that appropriate and adequate expertise is available to meet the obligations in the MOUs between the Fisheries Commissions and ICES and to meet the needs for fish population dynamics expertise in developing ecosystem advice
9. Any other business
10. Adoption of conclusions and recommendations
11. Closing of meeting

ANNEX 3: DOCUMENT LIST

Doc. No.	Title	Agenda item
1	Agenda	
2	Document list	
3	TORs for SGAWWP	
4	Council Resolutions adopted at 90th Statutory Meeting	5
5	Manual of operations: support for Expert groups	7
6	Chair's Handbook	7
7	Overview of Expert groups by parent committee and major topics	5
8	DG Fish Considerations for future MoU	6
9	Robin Cook's proposal for organisation of advisory work	6, 8
10	Benchmark-Update Assessments	6
11	Support for meetings in 2003	7
12	ACFM Action Plan	6
13	Form of ICES Fisheries Advice	6
14	The ICES advisory framework, directions for improvement, by Frans van Beek	6, 7, 8
15	ICES and Ecosystem issues by H.R. Skjoldal	5, 6, 7